**HAMZA IBN `ABD AL-MUTTALIB**
THE LION OF ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGER

After a day full of work, worship, and entertainment, the people of Makkah fell into a deep sleep. The people of the Quraish were turning in their beds except for one who forsook his bed of sleep. He used to go to bed early,rest for a few hours, then wake up in great anxiety for the expected appointment with Allah. He went to the praying corner in his room to supplicate to his God. Whenever his wife awakened upon hearing the voice of his long supplications, she shed tears out of warm sympathy and asked him not to take it so hard and to get some sleep. He only answered her in tears, "The time for sleep is over, khadijjah." At that time Muhammad was not yet a serious problem for the Quraish, although he had started to draw their attention as he started to spread his call secretly; those who believed in him were still quite few.

There were people among the non-believers who loved and respected him. They yearned to declare their belief in him and become one of his followers, but their fear of the prevailing norms and the pressure of inherited traditions prevented them. Among them was Hamzah lbn `Abdul Muttalib, the Prophet's paternal uncle who was at the same time his brother through fosterage (i.e. they

had been breast-fed by the same woman).

Hamzah was fully aware of the greatness of his nephew and of the truth he came with. He used to know him not only as a nephew, but also as a brother and friend because they both belonged to the same generation. They always played together and walked together on the same road of life step by step. But in their youth they departed, each one in his own way: Hamzah preferred the life of leisure, trying to take his place among the prominent leaders of the Quraish and Makkah, while Muhammad chose the life of seclusion away from the crowd, immersed in the deep spiritual meditation that prepared him to receive the truth.

Despite the fact that each of them had a different way of living out his own youth, Hamzah was always attentive to the virtues of his friend and nephew. Such virtues helped Muhammad to win a special place in the hearts of people and helped to draw a clear outline for his great future.

The next day, Hamzah went out as usual. At the Ka'bah he found a number of Quraishi noblemen. He sat with them, listening to what they had to say: they were talking about Muhammad. For the first time Hamzah saw them worried about the call his nephew was propagating with a tone of bitterness and rage marking their voices. Before that, they had never paid attention - at least they had pretended not to do so - but on that day their faces looked perplexed, upset, and aggressive.

Hamzah laughed at their talks and accused them of exaggeration. Abu Jahl said to his companions that Hamzah was the best one to know the danger of his nephew's call and that he pretended to underestimate this danger till the Quraish would relax so much that when they awakened it would be after his nephew had complete control over them.

They kept talking and threatening while Hamzah sat, sometimes smiling, sometimes frowning.
When they dispersed his head was full of new ideas about the issues of his nephew that they had discussed in his presence.

Days passed and the Quraish's whispering about the Prophet's call increased. Later, whispering turned into provocation and Hamzah watched from a distance. His nephew's composed, stead fast attitude towards their provocations puzzled him. Such an attitude was quite unfamiliar to the Bani Quraish, who were themselves known to be strong and challenging.

If doubts of the greatness and truth of Muhammad could steal into anyone's heart, they would have never stolen into Hamzah's heart, because he was the best one to know Muhammad from his early childhood to his youth, then to his proud, honest manhood. Hamzah knew Muhammad as he knew himself and may be more. Since they had come into life together, grown up together, and attained full strength together, Muhammad's life had been as pure and clear as the sunlight. It never occurred to Hamzah that Muhammad could make an error or a doubtful act in his life. He never saw Muhammad angry, hopeless , greedy,careless, or unstable. Hamzah was not only physically strong, but was also wise and strong-willed. Therefore, it was natural for him to follow a man in whose honesty and truthfuIness he whole heartedly believed. Thus he kept a secret in his heart that was soon going to be disclosed.

Then came the day. Hamzah went out of his house towards the desert carrying his bow to practice his favorite sport of hunting (in which he was very skilled). He spent most of his day there. On his way home he passed by the Ka'bahas usual, to circumambulate it.

Near the Ka'bah, a female servant of `Abd Allah lbn Jud'aan saw him and said, "O Abu `Umaarah! You haven't seen what happened to your nephew at the hands of Abu Al-Hakam lbn Hishaam. When he saw Muhammad sitting there,he hurt him and called him bad names and treated him in a way that he hated." She went on to explain what Abu Jahl had done to the Prophet of Allah. Hamzah listened to her carefully and paused for a while, then with his right hand he picked up his bow and put it on his shoulder.

He walked with fast, steady steps towards the Ka'bah, hoping to meet Abu Jahl there. He decided that if he did not find him, he would search for him everywhere till he did.

As soon as he reached the Ka'bah he glanced at Abu Jahl sitting in the yard in the middle of the Quraishi noblemen. Hamzah advanced very calmly towards Abu Jahl and hit him with his bow on the head till it broke the skin and bled. To everybody's surprise, Hamzah shouted, "You dare to insult Muhammad while I follow his religion and I say what he says? Come and retaliate upon me. Hit me if you can." In a moment they all forgot how their leader Abu Jahl had been insulted and they were all thunderstruck by the news that Hamzah had converted to Muhammad's religion and that he saw what Muhammad saw and said what he said. Could Hamzah really have converted to Islam when he was the strongest and most dignified Quraishi young man?

Such was the overwhelming disaster to which the Quraish were helpless, because Hamzah's conversion would attract others from the elite to do the same. Thus Muhammad's call would be supported, and he would find enough solidarity that the Quraish might wake up one day to find their idols being pulled down.

Indeed, Hamzah had converted, and he announced what he had kept secret in his heart for so long. Again Hamzah picked up his bow, put it on his shoulder, and with steady steps and full strength left the place with everyone looking disappointed and Abu Jahl licking the blood flowing from his wounded head.

Hamzah possessed a sharp sight and dear consciousness. He went home, and after he had relaxed from the day's exhaustion he sat down to think over what had happened. He had announced it in a moment of indignation and rage. He hated to see his nephew getting insulted and suffering injustice with no one to help him. Such racial zeal for the honor of Bani Haashim's talk had made him hit Abu Jahl on the head and shout declaring his Islam. But was that the ideal way for anyone to change the religion of his parents and ancestors and to embrace a new religion whose teachings he had not yet become familiar with and whose true reality he had not acquired sufficient knowledge of?It was true that Hamzah had never had any doubts about Muhammad's integrity, but could anybody embrace a new religion with all its responsibilities just in a moment of rage as Hamzah had done?

It was true that he had always kept in his heart a great respect for the new call his nephew was carrying and its banner, but what should the right time have been to embrace this religion if he was destined to embrace it? Should it be a moment of indignation and anger or a moment of deep reflection?
Thus he was inspired by a clear consciousness to reconsider the whole situation in light of strict and meticulous thinking.

Hamzah started thinking. He spent many restless days and sleepless nights. When one tries to attain the truth by the power of mind, uncertainty will become a means of knowledge, and this is what happened to Hamzah. Once he used his mind to search Islam and to weigh between the old religion and the new one, he started to have doubts raised by his innate inherited nostalgia for his father's religion and by the natural fear of anything new. All his memories of the Ka`bah, the idols, the statues and the high religious status these idols bestowed on the Quraish and Makkah were raised.

It appeared to him that denying all this history and the ancient religion was like a big chasm which had to be crossed. Hamzah was amazed at how a man could depart from the religion of his father that early and that fast. He regretted what he had done but he went on with the journey of reasonable thinking. But at that moment, he realized that his mind was not enough and that he should resort sincerely to the unseen power. At the Ka'bah he prayed and supplicated to heaven, seeking help from every light that existed in the universe to be guided to the right path.

Let us hear him narrating his own story: I regretted having departed from the religion of my father and kin, and I was in a terrible state of uncertainty and could not sleep. I came to the Ka'bah and supplicated to Allah to open my heart to what was right and to eliminate all doubts from it. Allah answered my prayer and filled my heart with faith and certainty. In the morning I went to the Prophet (PBUH) informing him about myself, and he prayed to Allah that He may keep my heart stable in this religion.

In this way Hamzah converted to Islam, the religion of certainty.

Allah supported Islam with Hamzah's conversion. He was strong in defending the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) and the helpless amongst his Companions. When Abu Jahl saw him among the Muslims, he realized that war was inevitably coming. Therefore he began to support the Quraish to ruin the Prophet and his Companions. He wanted to prepare for a civil war to relieve his heart of anger and bitter feelings.

Hamzah was unable, of course, to prevent all the harm alone, but his conversion was a shield that protected the Muslims, and was the first source of attraction to many tribes to embrace Islam. The second source was `Umar Ibn Al-Khattab's conversion, after which people entered Allah's religion in crowds.
Since his conversion, Hamzah devoted all his life and power to Allah and His religion till the Prophet (PBUH) honored him with the noble title, "The Lion of Allah and of His Messenger".

The first military raid launched by the Muslims against their enemies was under the command of Hamzah. The first banner that the Prophet handed to any Muslim was to Hamzah. In the battle of Badr, when the two conflicting parties met, the Lion of Allah and of His Messenger was there performing great wonders.

The defeated remnants of the Quraish army went back to Makkah stumbling in disappointment. Abu Sufyaan was broken hearted with a bowed head as he left on the battlefield the dead bodies of the Quraish martyrs such as Abu Jahl, Utbah Ibn Rabii'ah, Shaibah lbn Rabii'ah, Umaiyah Ibn khalaf, `Uqbah Thn Abi Mu'ait, Al-Aswad Ibn `Abdul Al-Asad Al-Makhzumi, Al- Wallid lbn `Utbah, Al-Nafr lbn Al-Haarith, Al-'Aas lbn Sa'iid, Ta'mah lbn `Addi and tens of other great Quraish.

But the Quraish would not accept the defeat easily. They started to prepare the army and to pull together all powers to avenge their honor and their dead. They insisted to continue the war. In the Battle of Uhud, all the Quraish went to war together with their allies from the Arabs, under the leadership of Abu Sufyaan once again.

The Quraishi leaders had targeted two persons in the new battle, namely, the Prophet (PBUH) and Hamzah (May Allah be pleased with him). If one had heard them talking and plotting before the war, one would realize that Hamzah was their second main target after the Prophet (PBUH).

Before they went to war, they had already chosen the person in charge of assassinating Hamzah: an Abyssinian slave with extra ordinary skill in spear throwing. They planned for him to kill Hamzah, his only role being to hit him with a deadly spear. They warned him not to be busy with anyother preoccupation other than Hamzah, regardless of the situation on the battlefield. They promised him the excellent reward of his freedom. The slave, whose name was Wahshiy, was owned by Jubair Ipn Mut`am. Jubair's uncle had been killed in the Battle of Badr, so Jubair said to Wahshiy,"Go out with the army, and if you kill Hamzah you will be free." Afterwards,the Quraish sent Wahshiy to Hind Bint `Utbah, Abu Sufyaan's wife, to give him more encouragement to kill Hamzah, because she had lost her father,uncle, brother, and son and it was said that Hamzah had been behind their deaths.

This was the reason why Hind was the most enthusiastic one of all the Quraish to escalate the war.
All she wanted was Hamzah's head, whatever the cost might be. She spent days before the battle pouring all her rage into Wahshiy's heart and making the plans for him. She promised him if he killed Hamzah she would give him her most precious trinkets. With her hateful fingers she held her precious pearl earrings and a number of golden necklaces around her neck and gazed at him saying, "All these are yours if you kill Hamzah." Wahshiy's mouth watered for the offer, and his soul yearned for the battle after which he would win his freedom and cease to be a slave, in addition to all the jewelry decorating the neck of the leading woman of the Quraish, the wife of its leader, and the daughter of its master. It was clear then that the whole war and the whole conspiracy were decisively seeking Hamzah.

The Battle of Uhud started and the two armies met. Hamzah was in the middle of the battlefield in battle dress and on his bosom he put an ostrich feather that he used to wear while fighting. He was moving everywhere cutting off the head of each polytheist he reached among the army of the Quraish. It seemed that death was at his command. Whenever he ordered it for anyone it reached him in the heart.

The Muslims were about to gain victory and the defeated army of the Quraish started to withdraw in fright, but the Muslim archers left their places on the mountain to collect the spoils of war that the Quraish had left.If they had not left their places, giving the Quraish cavalry the find a way, the battle would have ended as a gigantic grave for all the Quraish, including men, women, horses, and even cattle.

The Quraish attacked the Muslims by surprise from the back and started strilang them with thirsty swords. The Muslims tried to pull themselves together, picking up the weapons they had put down upon seeing the Quraish withdrawing, but the attack was too violent. When Hamzah saw what had happened, he doubled his strength and his activity. Hamzah was striking all around him while Wahshiy was observing him, waiting for the right moment. Let us hear Wahshiy himself describe the scene.

I was an Abyssinian man who used to throw the spear in an Abyssinian way that scarcely misses its target. When the armies met I searched for Hamzah till I found him in the middle of the crowd like a huge camel. He was killing every one around him with his sword. Nothing could stop him. By Allah, I prepared for him. I wanted him. I hid behind a tree so that I might attack him or he might come close to me. At that moment Sabaa'u Ibn `Abd Al-'Uzzaa approached him before me. When Hamzah glanced at him he shouted, "Come to me, you son of the one who circumcises!" and he hit him directly in the head. Then I shook my spear till I was in full control over it and threw it. The spear penetrated him from the back and came out from between his legs. He rose to reach me but could not and soon died. I came to his body and took my spear and went back to sit in the camp. I didn't want anything else to do with him. I killed him only to be free.

Let Wahshiy continue his story: When I returned to Makkah, they set me free. I stayed there till the Prophet (PBUH) entered Makkah on the Day of the Conquest. I fled to At-Taa'if. When the delegation of Al-Taa'if went to declare their conversion to Islam, I heard various people say that I should go to Syria or Yemen or any other place. While I was in such distress, a man said to me, "Woe to you! The Prophet (PBUH) never kills anyone entering his religion." I went to Allah's Prophet (PBUH) in Al- Madiinah, and the moment he first saw me I was already giving my true testimony. When he saw me he said, "Is it you, Wahshiy?" I said, "Yes, Messenger of Allah." He said, "Tell me, how did you kill Hamzah?" I told him, and when I finished he told me,"Woe to you! Get out of my sight and never show your face to me."
From that time, I always avoided wherever the Prophet (PBUH) went lest he should see me, till he died.

Afterwards, when the Muslims fought Musailamah the Liar in the Battle of Al-Yamaamah, I went with them. I took with me the same spear that I had killed Hamzah with. When the armies met, I saw Musailamah standing with his sword in his hand. I prepared for him, shook my spear till I had full control over it, threw it, and it went into his body. If I killed with this spear the best of people, Hamzah, I wish that Allah may forgive me, as I killed with it the worst of people, Musailamah.

Thus the Lion of Allah and of His Messenger died as a great martyr. His death was as unusual as his life, because it was not enough for his enemies to kill him. They sacrificed all the men and money of the Quraish to a battle only seeking the Prophet (PBUH) and his uncle Hamzah.

Hind Bint `Utbah, the wife of Abu Sufyaan, ordered Wahshiy to bring her Hamzah's liver, and he responded to her savage desire. When he returned to her, he delivered the liver to her with his right hand, while taking the necklaces with the left as a reward for the accomplished task. Hind,whose father had been killed in the Battle of Badr and whose husband was the leader of the polytheist army, chewed Hamzah's liver hoping to relieve her heart, but the liver was too tough for her teeth so she spat it out and stood up shouting her poem:

*For Badr we've paid you better

In a war more flaring than the other.

I was not patient to revenge the murder of

`Utbah, my son, and my brother.

My vow's fulfilled, my heart's relieved forever.*

The battle ended and the polytheists mounted their camels and led their horses back to Makkah. The Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions examined the battlefield to see the martyrs. There, in the heart of the valley, the Prophet (PBUH) was examining the faces of his Companions who had offered their souls to their Lord and had given their lives as a precious sacrifice to Him.

The Prophet (PBUH) suddenly stood up and gazed in an upset manner at what he saw. He ground his teeth and dosed his eyes. He never imagined that the Arabic moral code could be that savage so as to cut and disfigure a dead body in the dreadful way that had happened to his uncle, the Lion of Allah, Hamzah Ibn `Abd Al Muttalib. The Prophet (PBUH) opened his shining eyes and looked at the dead body of his uncle saying, "I will never have a worse loss in my life than yours. I have never been more outraged than I am now."
Then he turned to his Companions saying, "It is only for the sake of Safiyah [Hamzah's sister] that she should be grieved and that it should be taken as a practice after me. Otherwise, I would have ordered him to be left without burying so that he may be in the stomachs of beasts and in the craws of birds. If Allah destines me to win over the Quraish, I will cut thirty of them into pieces."
Therefore, the Companions shouted, "By Allah, if one day we conquer them, we will cut them in a way that no Arab has done before!" Allah honored Hamzah by making his death a great lesson for the Muslims to learn justice and mercy, even in situations when penalties and retaliation were justified.No sooner had the Prophet finished his threatening words, then a revelation came down to him while he was still standing in his place with the following verse: "Call mankind to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and sound advice,and reason with them in a well mannered way. Indeed your Lord is well aware of those who have gone astray from His way, and He is well aware of those who are guided. And if you retaliate, let your retaliation be to the extent that you were afflicted, but if you are patient, it will certainly be best for those who are patient; and be patient, yet your patience is only with the help of GOD, and do not sorrow for them, not distress yourself at what they devise. Indeed GOD is with those who are pious, and those who are doers of good" (16:125-127).
The revelation of these verses in this situation was the best honor for Hamzah. As stated before, the Prophet (PBUH) loved him dearly because he was not only an uncle, but also his brother by fosterage, his play mate in childhood, and the best friend in all his life.
The Prophet (PBUH) did not find any better farewell for Hamzah than praying for him among the numerous martyrs. Hamzah's body was carried to the place of prayer on the battlefield, in the same place which had witnessed his bravery and embraced his blood. The Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions prayed for him, then they brought another martyr and put him beside Hamzah, and prayed for him. Then they took the martyr away and left Hamzah and brought the next martyr and placed him beside Hamzah and prayed for him and so on.They brought all the martyrs, one after the other and prayed for them beside Hamzah, who on that day was prayed for seventy times (the number of martyrs).

On his way from the battlefield, the Prophet (PBUH) heard the women of Bani `Abd Al- Ashhal lamenting their martyrs and he said, "But Hamzah has no one to lament him." Sa'd lbn Mu'aadh heard this sentence and thought that the Prophet (PBUH) would be satisfied if the women would lament his uncle. He hurried to the women of Bani Abd Al-Ashhal and ordered them to lament Hamzah.When the Prophet (PBUH) heard them doing this he said, "I did not mean this.Go back, may Allah have mercy on you. There will be no crying anymore." TheProphet's (PBUH) Companions began to say their eulogies for Hamzah in praiseof his virtues. The poet Hassaan lbn Thaabit said in the course of a longpoem:

*Moan for Hamzah the one

Who won't forget your horse which was old.

He spurs horses when away they run

Like lions in jungles. He's strong and bold,

Whiter than Haashim. He looks in the sun

Except for the night, his tongue never told

Among your swords, in was he done,

Paralyzed be the hands that Wahshiy has sold."*

Abd Allah lbn Rawaahah also said:

*I moaned, but what did moaning do for me?

When they said Hamzah the Lion was killed

Abu Ya`liy, a man with honor was filled

For your death, pillars down were pulled.*

Safiyah, Hamzah's sister and the Prophet's (PBUH) aunt said:

*To the happy Paradise of Allah he was invited.

Such a destiny for Hamzah was what we wanted,

I won't forget you if I stayed or departed.

I moan for a lion by whom Islam was protected.

O brother, may Allah for what you did

Make you rewarded.*

But the best words said about him were those of the Prophet (PBUH) when he first saw him among the martyrs: "May Allah have mercy on you. You were, as far as I knew, always uniting blood relations and doing all sorts of goodness."

The loss of Hamzah was great and nothing could console the Prophet (PBUH) for it. But to his surprise, Allah offered him the best consolation. When he was walking home from Uhud, he saw a woman from the Bani Diinaar whose husband, father, and brother had been killed in the battle. She asked the returning Muslim soldiers about the battle. When they told her of the death of her father, husband, and brother, she soon asked them anxiously, "What about the Prophet of Allah?" They said, "He is very well as you wish him to be." She said, "Show me, let me look at him." They stayed beside her till the Prophet (PBUH) came and when she saw him she said, "if you are safe, all other disasters will be of no importance."

Yes, this was the best condolence for the Prophet (PBUH). He smiled at this unusual situation which had no similitude in loyalty and devotion. A poor, helpless woman lost in an hour father, brother, and husband. Her reaction to that news - which if it had fallen on a mountain would have made it collapse - was, "What about the Prophet of Allah?" It was such a well-timed situation that it is evident that Allah planned to console His Prophet (PBUH) forthe death of Allah's Lion and martyr of all martyrs.